

# Cook County Advocate

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News for Chicago Metro Area Families

## Youth winning the race of life after foster care

Elaine spent most of her teen years living in several relative and non-relative foster homes. Now at 21, this veteran marathon runner doesn't run from her past, but toward her future.

While in high school, Elaine applied for and received a DCFS college scholarship in 1999. Based on her grades and her many activities, she was awarded the scholarship and headed off to Illinois State University.

Now Elaine is a senior pursuing a double major in Exercise Science and Nutritional Science. She has completed over 100 credit hours at ISU and plans to graduate in the Spring of 2004. After attaining her degrees, she plans to attend graduate school at San Diego State University to study Sports Nutrition.



Elaine is a distance runner who has competed in marathons and triathlons for the past three years. She ran the Chicago Marathon for the first time last Fall. In addition to competing in these endurance events, Elaine plans to train/coach athletes at the collegiate or professional level.

Funding her college education has involved a variety of resources, including the DCFS scholarship. She has worked at the YMCA, which fits nicely with her studies and physical training. She has also maintained babysitting jobs and has secured private and student loans to meet her college expenses.

"I have used all of my savings for school...I no longer know the meaning of the word savings," said Elaine.

With a full schedule of studying, working, and training, Elaine still has found time to serve her community. She has volunteered at the crisis line PATH (Providing Assistance To Help) for the past four years. She now serves as a volunteer staff supervisor at PATH.

The desire to help others is often a response to help that has been received. Despite the challenges faced in being involved in the child welfare system, Elaine remains grateful for the support she received from individuals and agencies.

"I just want everyone at DCFS and Catholic Charities to know that you guys do a good job. All five of us (me and my four siblings), will remember you all forever, because we now have a future," said Elaine.

While running toward that future, the DCFS scholarship will make the course easier. Elaine says that, perhaps even more important to paying the many bills that come up, it has allowed her to find her own passion in life.

*Note: The Department awards 48 college scholarships each year. Please contact Dwight Lambert, Statewide Education Coordinator, Division of Education and Transition Services, at (217) 524-2030 with questions or information related to this program.*

## Christmas memories come compliments of Payton Foundation gifts

More than 5,000 children received a Christmas gift at the Holiday Parties held in the Cook Central, Cook North and Cook South offices. Connie Payton of the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation was there to personally hand out presents that were donated for children whose cases are being handled by the DCFS regions.

The parties gave families an opportunity to have some fun, meet other foster families and of course, open gifts. After working with DCFS for 13 years, The Payton Foundation demonstrated that it has elevated this event to a science.

Gifts were matched to children's requests (within reason) and were identified by gender and age. A new warehouse space kept the collections secure as donations poured in. DCFS staff, members of the DCFS Youth Advisory boards and community organizations volunteered hundreds of hours to help unload, sort and distribute the toys.

When the hard work was done, it was time to party. Office space was transformed with holiday decorations. Food donated by Dominick's and Reggio's Pizza was heaped onto conference tables.

Add some music, a clown, a couple hundred kids and repeated squeals of surprise and a good time was guaranteed.

The generosity extended beyond those children at the parties. The Payton Foundation also provided gifts for youth in residential placements, hospitals and independent living programs. Countless gifts went to private agencies serving foster children and intact families involved with DCFS.

The Department would like to extend its sincere thanks to the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation, Dominick's and Reggio's for the continuous support to bring some happiness into the lives of so many children and families.



*Cookie the Clown, DCFS Chief of Staff Martha Allen, Connie Payton, and John M. Clark, President and CEO of Reggio's Pizza share in the fun they and Dominick's provided.*



*Children and their families enjoyed the food, fun and gifts at the holiday parties held in each of the Cook County regions.*

## Juvenile Court recognizes outstanding casework with monthly award

When there is good news at Cook County Juvenile Court, the word gets out. Presiding Judge Patricia Bishop has implemented a Caseworker of the Month recognition program to acknowledge exemplary casework.

As judges and hearing officers conduct business, they encounter any number of situations and circumstances that can be especially challenging or even frustrating. But every now and then, something will happen that makes the hard work seem worthwhile. When a caseworker goes beyond the call of duty, a hearing officer or judge may recommend he or she receive a Caseworker of the Month certificate.

The Caseworker of the Month is acknowledged at the inter-agency meeting convened by Judge Bishop with representatives of the court and management from DCFS and private agencies. The merit program was started on the premise that while it is fair to take someone to task for poor performance, it is equally important to let people know that their good work is not in vain.



*Judge Patricia Bishop*

Last year there were more than a dozen instances of casework worthy of acknowledgment. One caseworker was recognized for her extensive research to find services to make adoption viable for a child with severe medical needs. Another worker undertook exhaustive recruitment efforts to secure an adoptive resource for a child. Sometimes just showing care and support for a child in crisis, unrelated to the case, can make a worker stand out. When a child was the victim of a crime, it was the caseworker who went to the police station to help file the reports and later address what had happened through therapy.

There is no limit to the good news since as many caseworkers as are recommended can receive the recognition in a given month. Judges and hearing officers are ready to make recommendations. As foster parents observe court proceedings, they too can call notice to the caseworker who is deserving of special recognition.

## Get an inside look at Juvenile Court during orientation session

For an overview of the Cook County Juvenile Court stop in for an orientation session. Foster parents, caseworkers, students and new court employees are invited to a half-day orientation to the Juvenile Court from 9:00 a.m. until noon. The session will include a tour of the court facilities and a question and answer period following presentations by individuals from the State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, DCFS Legal, and the Judge's staff.

Orientations for 2003 will be held on:

February 19	August 27
April 30	October 29
June 25	

Cook County Juvenile Court Auditorium  
2245 W. Ogden  
Chicago, IL 60612

Reservations are required. Call 312/433-6990 to reserve a seat. No children are allowed at the orientation. Parking is available for \$2. Be sure to allow extra time to pass through security.

## The Story Time reading group increases literacy

As part of the DCFS statewide “Fostering Literacy” initiative, “Story Time” is a new program at 3518 W. Division for Cook Central children and families. The project is sponsored by the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Educational Access Project for DCFS in conjunction with the Early Childhood Unit of DCFS. Marla Rosen, the Childhood Development Specialist for Cook Central is leading a group of children (ages 0 to 5) by reading stories and encouraging them to share their own stories.

The children are having so much fun they don’t realize Marla is working with them on language development, which is one of the components of early literacy. Studies have shown that children who are read to are better prepared to learn to read.

“**Story Time**” is offered to foster parents and day care providers and the young children in their care several times a month at the DCFS office located at 3518 W. Division. The sessions begin at 9:30 a.m. and last for an hour and a half.

Marla can read along to music, which gets the children up on their feet dancing as they learn. Several entertaining books were donated to the program. After the reading session, the children are served treats and listen to music.

The adult caregivers are taught tips for reading to their children at home and a current list of recommended age-appropriate books. The Cook Central region even worked with the local library to help families apply for library cards so they can keep reading at home. Additionally, at a recent meeting of the Regional Advisory Council, the region shared information about tutoring programs held at many area library branches.

Tutoring by certified teachers is available in the After School Homework Help [Teachers in the Library] program Monday through Thursday from 3:00 to 6:00 in the following locations:



### **Austin**

5616 W. Race Ave.  
312-746-5038

### **Douglass**

3353 W. 13<sup>th</sup> St.  
312-747-3725

### **Legler**

115 S. Pulaski  
312-746-7730

### **Lozano**

1805 S. Loomis  
312-746-4329

### **Toman**

4005 W. 27<sup>th</sup> St.  
312-747-8114

Families interested in attending “**Story Time**” with their children, should call Lety Nuñez, assistant education advisor, at 773-292-7731.



## Youth Advisory Board member ready to combat tough teen issues



Betty, 15, is a freshman in high school where she participates in the Naval Academy ROTC program. Initially she found it to be very difficult, but now likes the physical and mental challenges. In addition to regular studies, she is learning about the military and naval regulations and participates in community service activities. She is on the drill team and enjoys participating in competitions. Betty is not quite sure if she wants to join the navy after high school; she is interested in becoming lawyer. Her favorite television show is JAG, which is a show about lawyers practicing military law.

Betty is also secretary of the Cook North Youth Advisory Board (YAB). She enjoys participating on the YAB.

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"I think it's cool. You get to meet a lot of people from across the state and work with grown-ups who listen to what you have to say," Betty said.

Active on the YAB for the past year, Betty has been able to participate in many different projects and activities. Most recently she was part of a teen panel during the national adoption conference held by the North American Council on Adoptable Children. Betty was part of a group of teens that talked about what makes a good caseworker and good foster parents.

Betty likes her current caseworker and wishes there were more workers like her. However, she does have some advice for caseworkers. She believes that people have to realize that sometimes work doesn't just mean 9 to 5. Lives don't begin and end on a schedule. Betty also would like foster parents to remember an important lesson about trust.

"Everyone puts so much emphasis on being able to trust us kids and earning trust, adults have to earn our trust too. Most of us have been through a lot and building trust is important and needs to be mutual," she said.

Betty is making sure she is practicing what she preaches by staying involved. Through her studies and work with the YAB, Betty is making a difference, enriching her own life and the lives of others around her.

## Encourage a teen to join the Cook North Youth Advisory Board

The Cook North Youth Advisory Board (YAB) meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month (except December) at 4055 N. Western Ave. from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The YAB is a great way to meet other kids and work on important issues. The YAB invites all youth, age 14 and up, who are in foster care, adoptive or guardianship homes, and independent living programs to get involved and informed about the decisions affecting their lives.

### Upcoming Cook North Region Youth Advisory Board Meetings

February 24  
March 24

April 28  
May 26

June 23

Contact Holly Bitner, Division of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.

## New foster parent support group starts in Cook South

The Cook South Region recently began hosting monthly Foster Parent Support Group meetings. The Support Group was formed following a survey of foster parents who strongly agreed there was a definite need for additional support for foster, adoptive and guardianship parents. With the strong support of Regional Administrator Timothy Snowden and Resource Development Manager Charles Bowden, the support groups have been well-attended and have already shown benefits to the participants.

The mission of the support group includes multiple goals:

1. Providing foster/adoptive/guardianship parents with an ongoing format for expressing their concerns, and sharing the frustrations and challenges of foster parenting.
2. Improving communication between the foster parents and the region that will assist in stabilizing and preserving homes, and
3. Increasing awareness of available community services and supports throughout the Chicagoland area.

Recent meetings agendas included informational presentations by HealthWorks and the region's Registered Psychiatric Nurse on medications. The group also addressed the needs of children who have been stepped down into a foster home or less restrictive setting. Foster Parent participants had requested clarification and information in both areas and the region responded by providing the programming.

There have already been some exciting new developments from each of the meetings. For example, the group formed a mediation/conflict-resolution sub-committee that will address the specific concerns and issues of Foster Parents with DCFS Staff. While this brainchild is still in its developmental stages, the foster parent support group has great expectations and has the complete support of the Region.

Cook South Region welcomes all interested parties to participate in the support group meetings as the region strives to support and maintain foster homes. Look for dates to be posted on the regional calendar, or contact your foster parent support specialist for more information.

## Current pictures and fingerprints keep Cook South children safe

Have you seen your Cook South worker taking pictures of children lately? Have they been discussing how important it is for our children to have their fingerprints taken?

Cook South is striving to get pictures and fingerprints of all its children in substitute care. Having current pictures and fingerprints in the records, helps to ensure the safety and protection of our children. If pictures or fingerprints are ever needed for identification, we will have them.



But, safety is not the only reason that pictures are being taken. We want to encourage foster parents to take pictures of the children. We all have pictures of our childhood that our parents and relatives took of us. Many of our children miss out on this experience. So, much of their history is lost. We are asking that you help our children remember their history. Take pictures of them and the interesting things they did while in your home so they will have them if they leave. Help them create memories that they can share with their own families some day.

## Someone You Should Know: Ann Buckingham, supporting foster families for 23 years

Ann Buckingham has proven that she has staying power within DCFS. She has served as a Foster Parent Support Specialist for 23 years, providing advice, understanding and answers to foster parents in the southern Cook County suburbs. There are not many others who have been in the position as long as she.



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"I have enjoyed every moment of it. I like working with foster parents. I can be helpful to them. Sometimes they have problems and other times, they just need a sounding board," said Ann.

Her role can mean taking phone calls at night or early in the morning. It also means having to come up with new ways to help busy parents get the information they need to help their children. As president of the Cook South Regional Advisory Council and the Cook County President's Council, she makes a point of incorporating training into the regular meeting agenda.

"The children that foster parents are working with now have problems that are harder to manage. I encourage parents to get as much training as they can to help them do a better job," she said.

This practical perspective is also personal. Ann is a seasoned foster parent of 24 years. In that time, she has cared for more than 100 children, doing many emergency placements and reunifications. That experience makes her an invaluable resource as a foster parent support specialist and in her many volunteer leadership positions.

## Celebrate Black History Month and learn important facts

Americans have recognized black history annually since February 1926, first as "Negro History Week" and later as "Black History Month." Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-educated scholar born to parents who were former slaves, launched Negro History Week as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history.

Test your family's knowledge of Black History with this quiz from The Internet African American History Challenge®. More advanced tests can be found on the web site [www.brightmoments.com/blackhistory](http://www.brightmoments.com/blackhistory).

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| <p>1) Which African American was a famous abolitionist?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Frederick Douglass</li> <li>b) Alexander Crummell</li> <li>c) Henry McNeal Turner</li> <li>d) George Washington Carver</li> </ul>              | <p>3) What jobs did Harriet Tubman perform for the Union Army during the Civil War?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Nurse</li> <li>b) Cook</li> <li>c) Scout, Nurse and Cook</li> <li>d) Mechanic</li> </ul>               |
| <p>2) What was the underground railroad?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A secret meeting place</li> <li>b) A way for slaves to escape to freedom</li> <li>c) The name of a slave ship</li> <li>d) This is a trick question</li> </ul> | <p>4) What secret club did Frederick Douglass belong to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Elks</li> <li>b) Baltimore Mental Improvement Association</li> <li>c) Alpha Kappa Alpha</li> <li>d) Phi Beta Kappa</li> </ul> |

Answers: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. B.

# Cook County Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

**Module 1** - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

**Module 2** - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 3** - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

**Module 4** - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 5** - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 6** - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 7** - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 8** - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**Module 9** - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

**Module 10** - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

## COOK SOUTH

### Module

#### **African American Images**

March 1 & 8 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	10
& March 15 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	
March 4, 6	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	2
& 11 (Tues/Thurs)		
March 18, 20	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	6
& 25 (Tues/Thurs)		
March 22 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	8
& March 29 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	

#### **DCFS South Area Office**

March 4, 6, 11	6:30-9:30 p.m.	1
& 13 (Tues/Thurs)		

#### **DCFS Harvey Area Office**

February 24, 26 &	6:30-9:30 p.m.	2
March 3 (Mon/Wed)		

#### **Illinois Mentor**

March 8 (Sat) &	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	4
March 15 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	

## Other In-Service Trainings

#### **Power of Play (6 training hours)**

#### **DCFS South Area Office**

March 29 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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## COOK CENTRAL

### Module

#### **Association House (Spanish)**

March 22 & (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	2
& March 29 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	

#### **Circle Family Care**

March 29 (Sat) &	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	2
April 5 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	

## COOK NORTH

### Module

#### **Irish Center**

March 25, 27	6:30-9:30 p.m.	2
& April 1		

All classes are coordinated by Harold Washington College in Chicago.

Call 312-553-5821 or -3031 to register.

## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/ Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

## COOK SOUTH

#### **African American Images**

March 24 & 26 (Mon/Wed)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
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#### **Church of the Holy Family**

March 27 & April 1 (Thurs/Tues)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
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#### **Country Club Hills - Youth Empire**

March 8 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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#### **DCFS South Area Office**

February 24 & 26 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
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March 11 & 13 (Tues/Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
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March 15 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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March 22 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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#### **Harvey**

March 22 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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## COOK CENTRAL

#### **Circle Family Care**

March 3 & 5 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
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March 8 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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#### **Lutheran Child & Family Services**

March 29 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
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## COOK NORTH

#### **Harold Washington College**

March 18 & 20 (Tues/Thurs)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
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#### **Irish Center**

March 4 & 6 (Tues/Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
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